Summary and Reflection

Gallagher-Bolos, J A. (2008). [Whole-Class Inquiry Assessments](http://simplelink.library.utoronto.ca/url.cfm/110666). The Science Teacher, 75(6), 39-44.

This article goes over a whole-class problem solving technique called “Whole Class Inquiry” or WCI. The purpose of this is to build a scientific community, and can be incorporated into classroom projects. This technique builds trust, physical and emotional safety, community, journaling and class climate. The students are given a class test after their regular test, and are told that they must complete the questions as a class by a specified time, or it will not be marked. There is no guidance beforehand, especially not before the first one. This leads to panic and chaos, but the article explains that this is normal, and should pass with time if they are continued. The teacher is not allows to answer any questions, neither are students allowed to leave the room. They can use their texts and each other to solve the problem, which might also involve an experiment or data from a previous lab. The teacher is taking notes on quotes, conversations, mistakes, actions – and even recording it all on video. This allows for the debrief period to have video feedback – a great way for students to see those successes and failures. The teacher also provides one-on-one debriefing for students who did not participate fully, and then tries to remedy that with class discussions without naming names, and altering the next WCI to get everyone involved as fully as possible. Within this article, they also provided 2 chemistry examples of WCI problems.

I have never used this type of assessment before, and even after taking an assessment course in Teacher’s College, I have never heard of it. It seems like such a good idea though, but potentially I can see some students never participating, especially since it is a group-grade assigned to the entire class. But one of the main benefits is that is can help to improve inquiry skills in students who are struggling, without the pressure of one-on-one help. Learning from peers can be an excellent tool, because there isn’t an intellectual or age barrier. And since the whole class is working together and there is little pressure to get the “right” answer, students can feel free to voice their suggestions without fear of ruining the experiment for everyone else. This is such a great idea for the science classroom, where every student can potentially be a different level of understanding about inquiry – this can help to level the playing field. With this I would hope to accomplish increasing inquiry skills, and creating a sense of community within the classroom.

For me, I would use this as formative assessment during lab time, but summative during test time. This way students can practice the knowledge before they apply it.